
Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry (USA Retired) Pledges to Work Toward Afghanistan's Long-Term Success

**By
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[This article is provided courtesy of the *American Forces Press Service*, Washington, March 26, 2009.]

Army Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, former top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan, told a Senate committee today he will assume the ambassadorship there with a clear recognition that success in both Afghanistan and Pakistan is vital to U.S. national security.

Eikenberry, President Obama's nominee as ambassador to Afghanistan, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee his career has centered around Afghanistan since a terrorist-commandeered aircraft hit the Pentagon just below where he was working on September 11, 2001.

Afghanistan is where the cold-blooded September the 11th, 2001 attacks upon the United States were conceived and they were directed, he said.

But Eikenberry, who assumed command of U.S. Forces Afghanistan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led International Security Assistance Force there in 2005, said terrorists seek to inflict more damage.

Even as we speak, al-Qaeda and their allies operate inside of Afghanistan and from across the border in Pakistan, he said. They seek to create fear and chaos inside of Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to regain the territorial control that allowed them to so horrifically overturn the peace and tranquility of our homeland seven years ago.

Eikenberry pledged to support the cross-governmental effort he said is needed to deter terrorism and enable Afghanistan to succeed.

My professional experience inside of Afghanistan has reinforced what I've learned throughout my career, that lasting security can only be delivered through coordinated diplomatic, economic, and military means, he said.

Eikenberry underscored the challenges being faced and the importance of confronting them now.

The situation in Afghanistan is increasingly difficult, and time is of the essence. There will be no substitute for more resources and sacrifice, he said.

The United States, he said, "can and must foster the conditions for sustained success inside of Afghanistan and Pakistan."

The General vowed to work closely with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, U.S. military Commanders, U.S. government agencies, and international partners "to ensure that all elements of national power are brought to bear in mutually reinforcing ways."

He also noted the importance of more civilian expertise to support these national efforts, as well as additional contributions of the international community.

Of the efforts these elements support, among the most critical is strengthening and expanding the Afghan national army and police, Eikenberry told the senators. This, he said, will ensure they have the capability to secure their own country.

But also key, he said, is helping Afghanistan progress on the economic, development, and political fronts.

Without real progress on these issues, success will be very difficult to achieve, he said.

Eikenberry emphasized the importance of eliminating the opiate trade he said not only bankrolls the insurgency, but also undermines efforts to develop governance.

More development and more aid must be channeled to those areas [where] the insurgency is rife. Even more importantly, assistance must be targeted to the Afghan people, he said.

Eikenberry directed words of encouragement to the Afghan people, saying that U.S. and coalition support will help them achieve their goals of a better quality of life in a free and stable country.

When you achieve your goals, international terrorists will find no refuge inside of Afghanistan. And this is precisely where your interest, America's interest, and indeed the interest of the entire world come together. Your success is our success, he said.